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GOD'S FOREKNOWLEDGE OF HIS PEOPLE.

“Whom he did foreknow.”—Rom. viii. 29.

I. *THE foreknowledge here spoken of is a gracious foreknowledge.*—It respects peculiarly the people of God; for who, let us inquire, are the persons of whom the inspired writer is here speaking—the *whom* referred to, when he says, “*Whom he did foreknow?*” They are evidently the same persons spoken of in the context, in the preceding verse, as those who “*love God,*” who are “*the called,*” and who are the called “*according to his purpose:*”—in this verse as “*predestinated*” of God, and predestinated to be “*conformed to the image of his son;*” and, in the following verse, as “*predestinated,*” and “*called,*” and “*justified,*” and “*glorified.*” The kind of foreknowledge of which the Apostle is here speaking, is therefore special, and confined to such as are the saved. In one sense, indeed, all things and beings throughout the creation of God, were objects of his foreknowledge, when yet nothing but himself existed; for known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world. In one sense, the existence, and number, and character, and deeds, and final doom of wicked men—yes, and of devils too—were eternally foreseen of God. But the foreknowledge which he had of his people, was not a bare foreknowledge of their existence—it was not a foreknowledge simply of intellect—it was a foreknowledge of grace, a foreknowledge of favour and love, a foreknowledge which involved in it electing and predestinating grace, a foreknowledge which was the womb of all the arrangements and blessings of redemption. He foreknew, most certainly, the existence, character, and end of the wicked; but not with that “*favour which he bears to his people.*”—Ps. cvi. 4. If any have a doubt with regard to interpreting the foreknowledge before us, as implying distinguishing grace, we are able to

show, that the terms foreknowing and knowing are elsewhere used by this inspired writer, in such a way as necessarily to include peculiar regard. For example, in Rom. xi. 2, it is written, "God hath not cast away his people, which he *foreknew*." How foreknew? Foreknew certainly with distinguishing grace. And to be fully assured of the truth of this view, look down to the fifth verse, where the same persons who are here called "the people which he *foreknew*," are there called the "remnant according to the *election* of GRACE." In 2 Tim. ii. 19, God declares, "The Lord *knoweth* them that are *his*." How *knoweth* them that are his? So far as mere intelligence is concerned, he knoweth them that are NOT his; he knows all things; he knows the heart, and knows it under the most plausible disguise: there is no darkness or shadow of death where the workers of iniquity can hide themselves from him;—the meaning therefore must be, that he knoweth them that are his with that especial love which he bears to his "chosen." Take another example.—Our Lord declares, "I am the good shepherd, and *know* my sheep, and am known of mine." As far as the perception of his omniscient mind is concerned, he knows them that are not his sheep, as well as those who are. All men are his creatures, for he made them all; but of Christians only, not as creatures, but as *new* creatures in Christ Jesus, bought by his blood and born of his Spirit, can it be said, "Ye are Christ's." These he *knows*—knows with a shepherd's care, and sympathy, and love. Such is the knowledge of our heavenly Father; and such, of course, is the foreknowledge with which he regarded his people, of whom it is said, in a sense which cannot apply to the wicked, that he *foreknew them*.

II. *All the saved are comprehended in God's eternal foreknowledge.*—It was so particular, that every individual was specified; and so comprehensive, that all were embraced. Live where the Christian may, in whatever corner of the earth, or whatever generation of time; be his condition conspicuous or obscure—be he influential or insignificant—whatever be his earthly circumstances—he was individually and distinctly present before the mind and the regards of Jehovah, before he had made man, or ever he had framed the world. On the other hand, the innumerable company of the redeemed—the vast aggregate of those who, in every age and nation, have feared God and wrought righteousness—that great multitude which no man can number, which shall, at the last day, stand on the Redeemer's right hand: those who shall sing that new song of

salvation, "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and language."—Rev. v. 9;—those to whom he shall say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world!"—all these were embraced in God's gracious foreknowledge from eternity. In the 139th psalm, God teaches us to praise him for our fearful and wonderful bodily formation; and puts these words in our mouths, "My substance was not hid from thee: thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them." The very same thing may we say of the whole mystical body of Christ, and of each of the spiritual members of that body, which is the church. The members of Christ are "fashioned in continuance:" they are "born again," created in Christ Jesus unto good works; not all together, but in succession—day after day, and generation after generation—unto the end of time. In God's "Book," all these "members were written, when as yet there was none of them." Before the creation of man or earth, their "names were written in the book of life." They were "chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world." They were "predestinated," as God tells us, Eph. i. 5, 9, "according to the good pleasure of his will;" "predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." They were, as he declares in 1 Peter 1, 2, "Elect according to the *foreknowledge* of God the Father."

III. *All the means and blessings of salvation were embraced in the foreknowledge of God.*—View the Christian as an object of God's purpose from eternity. View him, in time, as endowed with eternal life: in heaven, view him with Christ in glory. View him in his new birth; his pardon; his activity and fruitfulness in the work of God: view him as a penitent, a believer, a servant of Christ, a man of prayer, a member of the church.—All this was embraced in the foreknowledge of God. The foreknowledge of God was the originating spring of an endless succession of causes and operations, which shall only come to a stand when the destined seats of glory—the many mansions of our Father's house, prepared for them from the foundation of the world—shall have been replenished by the "heirs of salvation." A chain of saving blessings stretches down from the throne of grace; and binds, in one general embrace, all the children of God. Every Christian is the subject of *all* saving blessings. We are not

to suppose, that here is a Christian pardoned, but not repenting; and that there is a Christian repenting, but not pardoned. We are not to conceive of ourselves as justified, but not regenerated; or regenerated, but possibly not justified. No: where one saving blessing is, as certainly all are; the possession of one secures the possession of the whole. Our present salvation on earth is a counterpart of God's foreknowledge and choice of us to salvation; and it will be followed up by the certain consummation of glory in heaven. The one is the security of the other. Blessing follows blessing, as cause and effect; and one part of salvation carries after it, in continuance, every other part of salvation, according to the infallible foreknowledge, the certain arrangement, and unchanging determination of Jehovah, who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. The salvation of men is no afterthought with God. It is the fruit of an eternal plan; and all its blessings, from first to last, from regeneration to glory—from the salvation of the first sinner, to the salvation of the last—from the fall of Adam, to the resurrection of the dead—all were arranged and provided for in the counsel and covenant of grace. If we are "called," we are the called according to his purpose. If we have the "adoption of children," we are "*predestinated* unto the adoption of children." If we are holy, we are "chosen, that we should be holy." If we have the "sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience," it is because we are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God."—1 Peter, i. 2. If we are doing good works, we are created in Christ Jesus unto these good works; and not only so, but these good works God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.—Eph. ii. 10. If we are in a state of salvation, God hath, from the beginning, chosen us to salvation, and that through "sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth."—2 Thess. ii. 13. If we are saved, we are saved "according to his *purpose and grace*, which was given us in Christ Jesus *before the world began*." If we have eternal life now—if we shall finally inherit it in heaven—it resolves itself in this, we are "ordained to eternal life."—Acts xiii. 48. The faith of all is secured for "as many as were ordained to eternal life believed;" and they shall believe at the exact time, his counsel has afore determined. Their spiritual life is secured; and not its existence only, but its certain and indestructible continuance,—hence called eternal life: for unless it be indestructible—unless it shall never, by any possibility, be taken away, or by any power be extinguished—it would be a gross contradiction in

terms, a gross untruth, to call it "eternal life." And hence our Lord promises, "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall *never* perish." Arminianism says, they *may* perish—they may, after having this *eternal life*: after being justified and born again, they *may* perish; but *Christ* says, "they shall *never* perish." The Captain of our salvation shall, without exception and without fail, conduct his many sons to glory. Not one of them shall be lost. "All that the Father giveth me," says Christ, "shall come to me; and him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out. And this is the Father's will, which hath sent me, that *of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing*, but should raise it up again at the last day."—John vi. 37, 39. In that great day, which shall wind up this world's history—when he shall have completed his delivering up of the kingdom (his people, his subjects) to the Father—he shall say, "Behold I, and the children thou hast *given* me." Then shall the full import of that declaration to the Father be made manifest to saints, and angels, and devils, and the wicked. John xvii. 6, 10, 12. "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me *out* of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me." All mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost."

Here we see with what certainty is secured the salvation of each and all "*whom* he did *foreknow*:" and secured, too, all the ingredients, all the blessings, all the means, and steps, and stages of that salvation. In that scheme of redemption in which he has not only "shown the exceeding riches of his grace," but in which he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence, we have no such absurd and monstrous contradiction, as a man "in Christ Jesus," and yet not "a new creature;"—no such monstrous absurdity as a man "justified, and yet not regenerated:"—no such monstrous absurdity as a man to whom there is no condemnation, and yet that man walking after the flesh and not after the Spirit—no such contradiction, as a man in a state of grace, and yet without repentance toward God; or a man having saving repentance, and yet not having faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ—no such absurdity as a man having his sins forgiven him, and yet not born again—no such falsehood as a man received up into glory without the essential qualification of holiness:—no such absurdity as a man justified and predestinated, and yet condemned to perdition—no such absurdity as a man being

bought with the blood of Christ or justified by God, and yet that man being sent away into everlasting punishment,—yea, that man burning in hell at the very moment Christ was buying him with his blood, dying for him on the cross ! No, no ; such absurdities may be detected in human systems ; but there are no such absurdities in that scheme of salvation, arranged according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, and by which is made manifest, to the innumerable angels, the manifold wisdom of God. Every one who is foreknown is predestinated to everlasting life ; and every one who is predestinated to everlasting life, is chosen to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit : and every one who is chosen and predestinated, is in due time converted and born again ; and every one who is converted and born again is justified ; and every one who is justified, is in due time glorified. His salvation is infallibly secured. Can any thing on this subject at all equal, in power of proof and conviction, God's specific declaration and arguments, downwards to the close of this eighth chapter of Romans. “ For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called ; and whom he called, them he also justified ; and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we then say to these things ? If God be for us, who can be against us ? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things ? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect ? It is God that justifieth ; who is he that condemneth ? It is Christ that died ; yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ ? ”

In the foreknowledge of God, there was an exact pattern of all the parts of Christian salvation. If all our bodily “ members were written in his book, when as yet there was none of them : ” if they were known of him before we were formed in the womb, and were fashioned after the model and design, which he had before his mind, when he said, “ Let us make man in our image, after our likeness ; ” certainly, the whole organization of the “ new man,” all his parts and progress, his new birth, his growth, his fulness of stature, his dying in the Lord, his entrance into heaven, his faith, his hope, his love, his penitence, his holy desires, all his wrestlings against sin, all his work of faith and labour of love, his whole

Christian life, from his coming to Christ for grace, till his going to Christ for glory, all are in succession fashioned according to the "counsel and foreknowledge" of the infinite mind. When I am told that "whom God foreknew, he did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his son;" when I am told that the "vessels of mercy are afore prepared unto glory;" and when I am told that, if Christians, we are "God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works," and which good works, "God hath before ordained that we should walk in them;"—I cannot but own, and feel, and praise grace for it; that every act of faith, and love, and gratitude, toward our Father and Redeemer, which I exercise; every good thought that passes through my mind; every holy determination I form; every prayer I offer up; every good work I perform; every mite I cast into the treasury of the Lord; every cup of cold water I give a disciple; every instance of mercy I show the poor and the sick; each one of all my holy desires, designs, and activities, is of the Spirit of God, working in me to will and to do; and that all this is an exact counterpart of the model of the Christian character, which existed eternally in the foreknowledge of God, which he fore-ordained that we should walk in it, and his "counsel determined to be done."

In the Christian's life and experience of salvation, we see what was the subject of God's gracious foreknowledge. According to his foreknowledge, does his Spirit frame the Christian man. The Christian's life is the counterpart of what was God's foreknowledge respecting him. Have we the blessings of salvation—have we the fruit of the Spirit—the mind that was in Christ Jesus—the meekness, gentleness, prayerfulness, holiness, of which he was the great exemplar? This evidence determines, if we possess it, that we are among those whom God foreknew; "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son."

We have thus seen that there is an exact correspondence between the foreknowledge of God and the heirs of salvation. The election of grace are the very same, who sing in heaven, "Thou hast redeemed us unto God by thy blood." Those of whom Christ shall say in the day of judgment, "They are mine, I have redeemed them", were given him by the Father from eternity, and their names written in the book of life. "The purpose of God, according to election, *shall* stand." His counsel *shall* stand, and he will do all his pleasure. The ransomed of the Lord *shall* come unto Zion, with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads. The redemption which he

has obtained for his people by his own blood, is "*eternal redemption*"—Heb. ix. 12; and the salvation of which he became the Author to all them that obey him, is *eternal salvation*—Heb. v. 9. There is, therefore, no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus. Let men speculate and cavil as they please; let human system builders endeavour to put such a construction on Scripture statements, as to establish the possibility of non-perseverance; let believers have minds ever so full of darkness and distress, respecting their present and final acceptance with God, nothing can shake that declaration of the true and unchanging Jehovah—"Nevertheless, the foundation of the Lord standeth sure; having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his." And if he knoweth them, "he foreknew them." God says he *did*, and are you prepared to say he did not? God hath *not* cast away his people whom he foreknew. Do you say he *may*? God says he hath not, and that he will not. The day of judgment shall declare that "*the election hath obtained it.*"—Rom. xi. 7.

IV. *When God eternally foreknew his people, he foreknew them in Christ Jesus.*—Whom he did foreknow, he viewed as represented by his own Son, as their head and surety, and party contractor in the covenant of grace. You are aware that God's foreknowledge must harmonize with his present knowledge. View the people of God in their natural condition. What does God see and know them to have been? He knows them to be the fallen descendants of fallen Adam—inheriting sin and death from their sinning progenitor—made sinners by his disobedience, and by nature children of wrath even as others. God knows them to have been so, and declares it in the Scriptures. View the people of God in their new condition. What does God know and see them to be? He knows and sees them to be "in Christ Jesus," united to his person, justified by his blood, sanctified by his spirit, having faith in him, obedient to him, loving him above all things, desiring to be with him in glory, and deriving from him, as their covenant head, life and all saving blessings. To them, as men, disobedient Adam, according to the covenant of works, was a head of sin, and death, and condemnation: to them, as believers, the obedient Son of God, by the constitution of the covenant of grace, is a head of justification, and life, and salvation. Such were they in the foreknowledge of God. To save them from guilt and misery; to purge out the deadly poison of sin from their souls; to repair the ruin of the fall, and raise them to a dignity and glory, immensely greater than

that from which Adam by transgression fell, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ entered into counsel and covenant with his only begotten and well-beloved Son—that Son who is styled the Father's fellow; who thought it not robbery to be equal with God; who was in the beginning with God, and was God. In the mysterious arrangements of eternal grace, the Son becomes the head and representative of "God's elect." The Father treats with him on their behalf. Out of the fallen mass of sinful mankind, viewing them as prisoners to his justice, and under righteous condemnation for their sin, he gives them to his Son. The Son of God undertakes to bring them to glory. He undertakes to atone for them, and is made answerable. Jehovah lays on him the iniquity of his people; and he consents to make his soul an offering for sin. He undertakes to finish the work given him to do. All blessings—power over all flesh, yea, a power in heaven and in earth are made over to him, as head and mediator of the covenant of mercy, "that he should give eternal life to as many as are given him."—John xvii. 2. Hence, God declares, that "He hath chosen us *in him*, before the foundation of the world."—Eph. i. 3. Hence, God declares that "he hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own *purpose and grace*, which was given us *in Christ Jesus* BEFORE THE WORLD BEGAN."—2 Tim. i. 9. Accordingly, when the Father, according to the arrangements of mercy, delivered up his own Son—when, in the fulfilment of the condition of the covenant, the Son of God gave himself an offering and a sacrifice, and thus made reconciliation, he is in possession of the legal right, and it becomes part of his mediatorial office to bestow all saving blessings on his people. Hence, when he ascended up on high, leading captivity captive, he received gifts for men. Him did the Father exalt to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. As the wife, in virtue of her marriage with her husband, however poor and lowly she may have been, becomes a sharer in all her husband's wealth and honours; in like manner believers, by virtue of their union with the Lord Jesus, become one with him, and participate in all the blessings he has obtained, and all the victories he has won. He is constituted "heir of all things," mediatorial heir, official heir, heir of all things *for them*; in his right they "inherit all things:" and, being heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, "all things are theirs."

V. To God's gracious foreknowledge of his people are

we, with gratitude and admiring wonder, to trace up the whole of our salvation.—That any are saved at all—that the whole “lump” is not cast away—that all are not “appointed to wrath”—that a single soul should be “appointed to obtain salvation,”—to what is it to be attributed as the originating cause? To no merit or purchase—to no predisposing cause in the creature—to no cause out of the bosom of Jehovah, but to his free and sovereign grace. The intervention of Christ is not the procuring cause of God's grace. On the contrary, his whole redeeming work, is the astonishing provision of grace for satisfying justice, in order to the salvation of men. The covenant of grace; the incarnation, sacrifice, ascension, and reign of Christ; our pardon, conversion, and holiness; our resurrection, our acquittal in the day of judgment; our eternal association with the family of heaven gathered together in one;—all, all, is in accordance with the eternal foreknowledge and gracious arrangement of God. “For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.”—1 Thess. v. 9, 10. “The Lord,” says the Psalmist, “*knoweth* the way of the righteous:” and if he knoweth it, he foreknew it; and if he foreknew it but a century, a year, a day, a moment, before, he foreknew it from eternity; foreknew it so as graciously to originate and provide for it.

Are the blessings of salvation provided—are any made partakers in them—are we sharers of them? Then let our gratitude and our praise ascend to our Father in heaven, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us; for the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness toward us, through Jesus Christ. What are the thanksgivings that God teaches the saved to offer up for their brethren and for themselves? For their brethren, 2 Thess. ii. 13—“But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren, *beloved of the Lord*, because God hath from the *beginning* chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth.” For themselves, Eph. i. 3–6—“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, *to the praise of the glory of his grace.*

That we may be fellow-heirs with the people of God, in all his blessings of his salvation, does he not teach us to make the subject of our constant prayers? Ps. cvi. 45—"Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people: oh! visit me with thy salvation; that I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance."

CEPHAS.

THE GOODNESS OF PROVIDENCE.

PSALM CIV. 27, 28.

"These wait all upon thee, that thou mayest give them their meat in due season. That thou givest them they gather: thou openest thine hand; they are filled with good."

To the Editors of the Christian Freeman.

I PROPOSE giving, in the present article, various practical illustrations of the very interesting and beautiful representations of the divine character, furnished by the pen of inspiration, in the passage prefixed. Any persons wishing to pursue more fully this very edifying branch of study, will find an immense mass of materials in the Library of Entertaining Knowledge, Ray's Wisdom of God in Creation, Paley's Natural Theology, Kirby and Spence's Entomology, and very many other works.

God is the universal Parent. All animate creatures are anxiously looking to his hand for the supply of their wants, and they look not in vain. In the most varied and most abundant manner he feeds them all. Before they have entered into existence, he has laid up a store for them; before appetite has commenced its cravings, he has prepared a supply. In the case of a great majority of insects, their maker has provided an abundant store for them before they come into being, by the instinct which teaches the mother to leave her egg upon or near some appropriate food for her coming young.

In the tender and assiduous affection of parents, the great Parent of all has provided a most appropriate and abundant supply. The young pigeon, till capable of digesting the ordinary food of its species, is supported by a substance similar to milk; a change going on during the period of incubation, in the crop of both male and female parent, to enable them to supply their offspring with this remarkable provision of the great Creator's goodness.

Though the accounts given by different authors are fabulous, respecting the pelican feeding its young with its own blood ; yet there is a striking illustration of the provident goodness of God, in the bag with which he has furnished the pelican, and in which it carries fish to its young.

Of the abundance of food with which the goodness of the Great Parent supplies his offspring, illustrations in great variety might readily be furnished. The fish-hawk, the white-headed eagle, and other birds which prey on fish, bring to their young a superabundance of provision. How happily is such an abundant supply adapted to the wants of the young, whose rapidly increasing growth demands so much nourishment ! The eagle brings to its young such supplies of good and wholesome provision, that some, it is said, have turned this parental kindness to good account, by tying the young eaglets in the nest, and robbing them of a portion of the rabbits, hares, lambs, and other good fare so plentifully procured for them. What a security for the abundant provision of the young, has the Lord of all established in fond, self-denying parental affection !

An individual has calculated that a pair of sparrows carry to their young, in the course of a single week, 3360 caterpillars. Supposing that even half the number were actually brought, what unwearied assiduity in the parents ! how plentiful the repast provided for their young ! A naturalist, who accurately observed the motions of a pair of starlings, calculated that they did not travel less than fifty miles each day ; visiting their young with food about a hundred and forty times in twelve or thirteen hours. Here, then, is a most abundant and most regular supply of delicious food for these little creatures, all helpless and insignificant as they are. Whence such a supply ? The answer is ready on a thousand tongues, both of philosophers and the vulgar throng—"Nature prompts the parents to provide it—nature has implanted an instinct in the breast of the parents which impels them to provide for their young." And who, pray, is this Nature ; who is talked of so familiarly in the feminine gender, as though every lady could claim intimate acquaintance with her ? Is she a goddess, or is she a mere personified nothing ? Has this goddess, or this personified abstraction, infinite power, so as to furnish the contemptible common flea, for example, with a muscular power, which, were man of proportionate strength, would enable him to bound along at the rate of a quarter of a mile each step :—has she infinite wisdom to direct the mother insect to leave

her egg on no plant, but that very one which is suited to the support of her progeny, which will come into existence when she shall be far away, or dead; and to induce her to pass by any leaf where an egg has been already deposited, knowing that it would not furnish sufficient nourishment for the progeny of another as well as her own? No, no: *Nature* has nothing of all this, can do nothing of all this more than a word could do it; and what is nature but a word? The great universal Parent, in his infinite power and infinite wisdom, has arranged all; and by whatever specious names, or high-sounding false philosophy, we may deceive ourselves, the fact remains unaltered, that the whole animate creation are receiving their daily food as truly and as really from God, as the infant at the breast is receiving nourishment from its mother.

The universal Parent who provides so abundantly for the helpless young, affords, to the more matured, most astonishing powers for obtaining for themselves, at the very earliest period of their life, a portion at least of their food. The chick, for example, when, after repeated blows, it has thrust its head through the shell, will seize upon a spider which happens at the moment to be passing, though it never saw or heard of a spider before. Look to a brood of young ducks, which have been hatched under a hen, and which have received no instructions in the art of swimming; yet how fearlessly, in spite of all the remonstrances of their fond mamma, do they launch forth into the horse-pond, guiding themselves to the nearest *ducks-meat*, with a thousand times the cleverness of the greatest philosopher in the universe, with all the laws of curvilinear and rectilinear motion at his back. Then, again, with what remarkable wisdom has the great Parent enabled his creatures to obtain security in the regular supply of food. Is the beast carnivorous and large, requiring a great supply? He dwells alone; for, were such animals as lions to herd together like deer, what would all their strength or cunning avail for their supply? Such terrific animals live alone—other animals keep far from their vicinity—and therefore God has furnished them with cunning, in addition to their fearfully destructive powers. They lie in wait ready for the fatal spring; and, in due season, the Parent of all sends them food. When they roar for lack of prey, and seek their meat from God, they seek not in vain.

Animals of inferior strength, but of strong carnivorous appetite, often display much wisdom in uniting for plunder.—Wolves furnish a striking illustration. Being inferior in speed

to deer, they have frequently recourse to a most masterly plan for making them a prey. Assembling in crowds around the unsuspecting deer, and forming themselves into a crescent, they move slowly and silently forward, till they find that the whole herd is prevented from retreating toward the plain, and that the only open for escape is towards the brink of some hideous precipice; then with rapid speed, and tremendous yells, they rush upon their prey, urging the poor deer toward the precipice, down which, in their hurry, they fling themselves, to become food for the voracious wolves who descend in triumph to the spoil.

The weaker animals are liable to sudden and fatal attacks, while partaking of that food which their bountiful Creator has provided. To escape such, many of those which are gregarious have recourse to the wise and very efficacious plan of placing a sentinel.

Sheep, in mountainous countries, feed in bands; and pass from one grazing ground to another in ranks, one deep, with a leader at their head, whose business is to give immediate warning whenever danger threatens. Any one who has observed, or at least endeavoured to surprise a flock of sparrows, must be aware, that, in their foraging expeditions, they have always one sentinel or more, to sound the alarm on the most distant appearance of danger.

The strict guardianship observed by the sentinels of rooks is so well known to every schoolboy, who, in his vacation time, has tried in vain "to get a shot at the crows," that it is no wonder he should fall readily into the old blunder, that "rooks smell gunpowder." They understand, however, what shooting means; though their scholar-craft does not seem to go so far as to decide between a fowling-piece and a walking-stick, for the one will frighten them as fast as the other.

While thus the lower animals enjoy, so securely and abundantly, the food which the Lord has provided, their supply often benefits instead of injuring man.

The vulture, by his strong appetite for carrion, his gregarious properties, and acute senses, is admirably qualified for the office of a scavenger in warm climates, where it is absolutely necessary to have putrid carcases immediately removed. So essential is the office of such birds as the black vulture and turkey buzzard considered in warm climates, that it is not unusual to inflict heavy penalties for killing them.—No wonder, for in Charleston, for example, where the penalty for killing a vulture is five louis d'or; every thing in the form of a carcase,

from a horse to a chicken, is instantly made as clean by vultures as by the knife of a surgeon.

In a climate such as ours, we require, in no ordinary degree, the assistance of those various classes of birds, for which their Maker has provided such an abundant supply of insect food. Supposing (which would not be extravagant) that a single pair even of so very small birds as tom-tits bring a thousand grubs a day to a single brood, we may form some idea of the extensive destruction caused during the summer by our soft-billed birds. If we but knew the benefit conferred on us by swallows, we should prize them as our friends, and adore the beneficent Providence which employs such effective means for promoting our comfort and happiness. But for their assistance, in clearing our atmosphere of flies, one of the plagues of Egypt would be on us continually. "I am sure," says one naturalist, "that I speak within compass, when I state that there was a mass of flies just caught by this single swift (which he had shot) larger than, when pressed close, could conveniently be contained in the bowl of an ordinary table-spoon."

Man's ignorance of the advantages which he derives from some of the insect-devouring tribes, has sometimes led him to destroy his best friends. "The rook," says Selby, "from its sometimes eating grain and other seeds, has erroneously been viewed in the light of an enemy by most husbandmen; and, in several districts, attempts have been made either to banish it or to extirpate the breed. But whenever this measure has been carried into effect, the most serious injury, to the corn and other crops, has invariably followed, from the unchecked devastations of the grub and caterpillar. As experience is the sure test of utility, a change of conduct has in consequence been partially adopted; and some farmers now find the encouragement of the breed of rooks to be greatly to their interest, in freeing their lands from the grub of the cockchafer. In Northumberland I have witnessed its usefulness, in feeding on the larvæ of the insect commonly known by the name of Harry Longlegs, which is particularly destructive to the roots of grain and young clover."

The immense variety of instruments and devices, with which the good Parent of all has furnished his creatures for providing their food in due season, would afford an extensive field of interesting and profitable illustration; but on this I have not time at present to enter.

I am yours, &c.

X

OBJECTIONS TO THE TRUTH OF REVELATION.

THE celebrated David Hume invented an argument, the object of which was, to invalidate the evidence of divine interposition arising from miracles, which, in its day, produced a considerable sensation. It is to this effect:—"We have always stronger evidence that a miracle has not been performed, than that it has; because a miracle, being contrary to the natural course of events, we have our own experience, and the united testimony of mankind, in support of the natural course of events; whereas, we have only the testimony of comparatively few individuals in support of any miracle: and we ought rather to believe our own senses, and the general experience of mankind, than the testimony of any individual, however respectable."

This argument has been well answered by several writers, particularly by Professor Campbell, Archdeacon Paley, and his Grace the present Archbishop of Dublin, in his "*Elements of Logic*," under the word *experience*. It is a mere piece of sophistry, the whole plausibility of which lies in the ingenious use of the idea of a regular course of events; by which the testimony of all who did not witness an event, is made to weigh against the testimony of the few who did. The argument is, at bottom, the same with that which was said to be used by a witty native of Ireland, who, when he was charged with an act of theft, and informed that two witnesses could be produced who saw him commit the theft, replied, "What are two witnesses, when I could bring twenty witnesses who *did not see me?*"

That which falls within my plan to notice respecting it is, that it is utterly inconsistent with just and admitted principles in investigating truth. A true philosophical spirit consists at least as much in having the mind open to the belief of the most extraordinary facts on competent evidence, as in rejecting speculations or narratives which are not sufficiently supported by evidence. But Hume's argument goes directly to shut the mind against the belief of any facts, which seem contrary to common experience. It would, for example, justify a native of Bantam, as indeed Hume admits, in refusing to believe, on the most undoubted testimony, that in some countries the surface of rivers and of the ocean, under the influence of extreme cold, becomes so hard and compact that it would bear the weight of an elephant; and it is precisely such a piece of sophistry as we might expect the uneducated inhabitants of a hot climate to

employ in repelling any testimony that might be offered to them on the subject. "We have," they would probably say, "the evidence of our own senses, and the testimony of all men but yourselves against it, and we cannot believe you." Nor can I conceive how a man, who adopts Hume's principle, could expect to be believed in offering such information, and yet his information would be true, and the philosopher of the torrid zone would be prevented, by this principle, from receiving and profiting by the knowledge of an interesting fact. So Hume's argument tends merely to form an inveterate prejudice against the reception of what, for aught he knew, might be an important fact,—that God had interposed to interrupt the ordinary course of events, as the only means of giving his sanction to the information contained in the holy Scriptures.

With regard to the miracles recorded in Scripture, it may be remarked,—1st, That present *experience* is not, as Hume and his disciples assume, applicable to them; for experience is limited to objects under our individual notice: and, 2dly, *testimony* cannot, with any propriety, be said to be *against* them; for there *is* testimony in their favour, but none against them—that is, there is no testimony of persons who were on the spot at the time, and rejected the belief of the miracle after adequate examination. The testimony of such as were not present bears not upon the subject; it is the pretended experience of one who had no experience as to the point in question.

There are, indeed, several ambiguities in this celebrated sophism. One has just been pointed out in the use of the word "testimony." Another is in the application of the word "experience," as Dr. Whately has shown in his work alluded to. Whose experience is meant? Is it the universal experience of mankind? Is it that mankind have often experienced the falsity of testimony, but have never experienced a miracle? That would be obviously taking for granted the very question at issue. Is it, then, his own individual experience, that he personally had frequently experienced the falsity of testimony, but never had experienced a miracle? That no doubt was true; but to argue from that truth, in this case, it would be necessary to adopt the principle, that no man ought to believe any thing of which he had not personal experience,—a principle which no man of sane intellect could act upon. Is it, then, something between universal and individual experience, namely, common and ordinary experience, or the experience of men generally? In this sense of experience, the

argument would be, that men generally have had experience of the falsity of testimony, but not of miracles; or, in other words, that false testimony is much more frequently experienced than miracles. This, also, is true; but it is a truth on which no argument could be founded, respecting any particular case of testimony. Who ever thought of determining the truth of testimony, in any case, by the doctrine of chances for or against testimony in the abstract, instead of examining the nature and quality of the testimony offered? What should you think of one who should attempt to persuade you that Columbus never discovered America, upon this ground, that, whilst millions of travellers had told lies, no one before had ever discovered a continent; and, therefore, that there were millions of chances to one against the truth of this narrative? The answer would be, that the question is not about testimony in the abstract, but about the particular testimony of Columbus, in which must be taken into account his character, the circumstances under which his testimony was given, the confirmations that exist of the truth of it; and then it will be found that such testimony, so confirmed, and yet false, would be a greater wonder than the discovery of the continent of America. Now such is the direct reply to Hume's sophistry respecting general experience, when employed to invalidate the testimony of the inspired writers. The question is not about human testimony in the abstract, but whether such testimony as the Scripture records, given under the particular circumstances in which the witnesses stood, and confirmed by such a mass of corroborative evidence, could be false. And thus it would appear, that the falsity of the Scripture testimony would be a greater wonder than any of the miracles which the Scripture requires us to believe.

The second class of objections consists of those that have been advanced against the historical narrative of Scripture. These are, in general, more of the nature of cavils than arguments; most of them founded upon mistranslation of Scripture language, or ignorance of facts that were calculated to elucidate the sacred text.

When any persons came to our Lord in a teachable, humble spirit, to have any difficulty solved, he always received them kindly, and taught them with the utmost condescension; but when persons came to him, asking him questions for the purpose of entangling him, he usually answered them by an argument *ad hominem*; that is, an argument applicable peculiarly to the person with whom it is used, and fitted rather to silence

than to instruct him. Thus, when the Pharisees ascribed the miracles of our blessed Lord to the agency of Beelzebub the prince of the devils, he answered them thus:—"If I," said he, "by Beelzebub do cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore, they shall be your judges." When, again, the Pharisees demanded of him by what authority he acted, he replied by asking of them, whether the doctrine of John the Baptist was of heaven or of men; well knowing that they durst not answer that question. This mode of treating the Pharisees, adopted by our Lord, seems to point out the proper method of meeting captious, cavilling objections, which do not naturally present themselves as difficulties to an humble, inquiring mind; but which are invented with much ingenuity, and eagerly caught at without investigation. If a person, seriously inquiring after the truth, and disposed to receive it wherever he shall find it, desire to be satisfied with regard to the divine inspiration of the Bible, he can be directed to that body of evidence, a small portion of which I have been endeavouring to elucidate; and if difficulties occur to him in the course of his inquiry, they will gradually be removed by patient research. But if a man be obviously setting himself to discover objections, and if, when one cavil is removed, he invents another to take its place, the proper mode of dealing with him is, to expose his inconsistency, by showing, that if he treat other subjects in a similar manner, he must reject every historical narrative, and every discovery in philosophy, and return to the ignorance of the rudest states of society.

For example, some have objected to the different forms of expression which are used in narrating the same transaction. Dr. Middleton stoops so low as to observe, that John the Baptist is represented by one of the evangelists as saying—"whose shoes I am not worthy to bear;" and by another as saying—"the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose." Now, not to insist on the probability of John's using both the forms of expression, and perhaps many others to the same effect, in the course of his preaching and conversations, if such an objection be held valid, we must reject almost every history or narrative extant, which is given by more than one narrator; for scarcely, in a single instance, have two historians ascribed precisely the same words to persons whose sayings or discourses they have recorded.

Again: some have objected to the truth of particular facts recorded in Scripture; and their inconsistency may usually be discovered in their believing something of a similar nature on

much weaker evidence—perhaps on no evidence whatever. One philosopher, for instance, you will find endeavouring to prove that mankind could not have descended from one common stock, and enumerating a number of distinct races; and yet, perhaps, you will find the same man tracing various animals, extremely dissimilar, such as the wolf and the dog of every size and kind, to one origin; or perhaps adopting some wild theory, by which mankind are made to originate in some species of baboon or ape, for which there is not the vestige of a foundation.

Another class of philosophers you will find disputing the account of the general deluge, given in the book of Genesis; and when you ask them how they account for the remains of fishes, shells, and other marine substances, that are found at great depths under the surface of the ground, perhaps you will find that they have embraced some stupendous theory, such as, that the world, as it now is, was formed out of the fragments of a former world, which former one was melted by fire, say some, or was dissolved in water, say others; and that its present mountains and rocks were deposited or chrystallized out of one of these states of fluidity. I would not be understood as giving any opinion respecting the truth or falsehood of either of these theories. I notice them merely for the purpose of observing, that a person who believes either, should find no difficulty in believing the history of the deluge.

It was a favourite object with the infidels of the last age—Voltaire, Rousseau, &c.—to discover historical documents reaching further back than the time of the deluge; and certain catalogues of kings that were found in eastern countries, which appeared to carry the history of these countries back many thousands of years farther than the period allotted in Scripture for the creation of the world, were eagerly caught at; and, although totally destitute of any collateral support, or any internal evidence of truth, were triumphantly opposed to the history of Moses. Subsequent research has proved, either that these catalogues are wholly fabulous, or that dynasties of kings, who reigned at the same time in different parts of the same empire, are placed one before the other; or that, in the computation, months were used and not years: so that, in point of fact, no authentic document has yet been discovered, which reaches so far back as the days of Moses.

Some sceptics, still more daring, have affected to deny that there ever was such a person as Jesus Christ; and when they are required to give some rational account of the origin of the

Christian church,—where and how it arose, by what means it superseded the paganism of the Roman empire,—it is discovered that they are giving credence, like Gibbon, to some metaphysical speculation, which leaves the principal facts of the case unaccounted for, and which daily observation proves could not have produced the effects ascribed to it.

There was an objection to the chronology of Scripture, stated some years ago, which attracted considerable attention, and which I shall here notice.

You are, I dare say, aware that the equinoxes do not happen every year when the sun appears in the same place in the heavens; but that his place, at the time of each equinox, varies a little every year by a regular motion: so that it can be calculated where the place of the sun was, and where it will be, at the equinoxes of any given year. This variation is called the *Precession of the Equinoxes*.

Now when Bonaparte was in Egypt, some of the philosophers who accompanied his army found two temples in Upper Egypt—the one at Dendara, the other at Esneh—on the ceilings of which were pictured certain figures, which they concluded were intended for the signs of the zodiac; and observing in what sign the solstice was placed, they asserted that these zodiacs must have been constructed long before the time allotted in Scripture for the deluge, or even for the creation of the world.

This inference, however, was founded on the most unwarrantable assumptions; and subsequent observation has proved the whole to be the invention of the republican infidels.

In the first place, it was not very evident that the pictures referred to were zodiacs. In the next place, admitting them to be zodiacs, the place of the solstice is so obscurely indicated, if indicated at all, that the philosophers themselves are not agreed about it. There is a difference among them of some eight or nine thousand years in the computation. But, in the last place, the whole speculation is exposed to utter contempt by a discovery of Champollion, that one of the temples, containing the supposed zodiac, was built in the reign of Liberius, and by another discovery of a similar zodiac, on the case of a mummy, bearing the date of Domitian.

Let me just oppose to this speculation a fact noticed by a late admirer of the French philosophy.

From the astronomical phenomenon which I have described above, namely, the gradual advancement of the sun's place in the heavens, at the time of the equinox, combined with the

elliptical form of the earth's orbit, it has happened that a longer time intervenes between the vernal and the autumnal equinox, than between the autumnal and the vernal. The vernal equinox happens on the 21st of March; and the autumnal, on the 22d of September. Now, if you will take the trouble to reckon, you will find, that there are more days between the 21st of March and the following 22d of September, than there are between the 22d of September and the following 21st of March. From this it follows, that the northern hemisphere enjoys a longer summer than the southern hemisphere. This difference has gradually increased for some thousands of years, and will continue to increase, if the world should remain for thousands of years longer.

But it is manifest, that there must have been a time when the northern and southern hemispheres were equal in this respect; and, by calculation, it is found that they were so about 4000 years before the Christian era,—that is, about the time that the Scripture assigns to the creation of the world.

I would not build much on this coincidence; but it seems to me to be much more than a set-off against all the zodiacs that have ever been discovered.—*Carlile's Letters*.

THE SCRIPTURE ACCOUNT OF MAN.

Continued from page 186.

HAVING proved that the state of man is that of condemnation, his CHARACTER, I go on to observe, is depraved. So abundant is the evidence in behalf of this truth, and so great is its practical importance, that there is scarcely a chapter in the Bible in which it is not taught. To bring forward, however, this evidence in detail, is as unnecessary as it would be impossible. The following passage is entirely decisive; and yet it is only a sample of what we find in every page of the sacred volume: "The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside; they are altogether become filthy: there is none that doeth good; no, not one."—Psalm xiv. 2, 3. Taking for granted, that the universal depravity of mankind is sufficiently proved in this portion of Scripture, I proceed to remark, that this depravity consists in three things,—the want of original righteousness, corruption of the whole nature, and wickedness of life. A few words, on each of these points, will not only illustrate, *but confirm the doctrine.*

That mankind are *destitute of original righteousness* is manifest from the fact, that they are repeatedly represented in Scripture as “dead in trespasses and sins:” possessing, it is true, the various organs of the human frame, but seeing not with their eyes, nor hearing with their ears, nor understanding with their heart; yielding not their “members as instruments of righteousness unto God.” What could be a more affecting or a more decisive evidence that, by nature, we have no inclination either to glorify or to enjoy our Creator?

But this is not the worst trait in our character. Not only are we negatively destitute of the principle of obedience to the commandments of God,—we are positively in possession of the contrary principle. The image at first impressed on our hearts is effaced; but this is not all,—the image of Satan occupies its room. We have to complain, accordingly, not only of the want of original righteousness, but also of the *corruption of our whole nature*. This, also, is repeatedly taught in the Scriptures. “What is man?” asks Job; “what is man that he should be clean; and he which is born of a woman that he should be righteous? Behold, he putteth no trust in his saints: yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight. How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water!”—Job xv. 14–16. “Behold,” says David, “I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.”—Psalm li. 5. And in another passage he confidently asks, “If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities; O Lord, who shall stand?”—Psalm cxxx. 3. “Because sentence against an evil work,” says the Preacher, “is not executed speedily,” therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.”—Eccles. viii. 11. To the same purpose is the confession of Isaiah, in behalf of the church, “We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags: and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities like the wind have taken us away.”—Isaiah lxiv. 6. The apostle Paul, too, felt most deeply the power of corruption, when, after describing it as warring against the law of his mind, he exclaimed, in allusion to the putrid corpses which were bound to Roman culprits, “Oh wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”—Rom. vii. 24. To sum up all, “THE HEART IS DECEITFUL ABOVE ALL THINGS, AND DESPERATELY WICKED; WHO CAN KNOW IT?”—Jer. xvii. 9.

But a view of human nature, which is still more humiliating, is yet in reserve. If the whole machinery of the inner man

lies in a state of such woful derangement, we might naturally expect that this would show itself in the outward conduct. If the fountain is so exceedingly impure, its streams can be nothing else but the ebullitions of its filthiness. From the corruption of our nature, accordingly, our attention is turned to its invariable effect,—*wickedness of life*. On this point, also, the testimony of Scripture is clear and decisive. “Out of the heart,” the Saviour assures us, “proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.”—Matt. xv. 19. In the epistle to the Galatians, we have a still more extended catalogue of the works of the flesh;—they are these: “Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like.”—Gal. v. 19–21. Nor are we to suppose that any of these are merely abstract crimes, which have rarely an existence in real life. The Apostle would dispossess us of this idea, if we were so foolish as to indulge it, by his reasoning in the third chapter of his epistle to the Romans, where he brings together several passages from the Old Testament, and applies them to all mankind in their natural state. After quoting, from the 14th Psalm, the solemn declaration of Jehovah, that “there is none that doeth good; no, not one,” he goes on to say—“Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; their feet are swift to shed blood; destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace have they not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes.”—Rom. iii. 13–18.

What a gloomy picture of human nature! Nor is it overcharged. It is drawn by the pencil of inspiration; and it is a perfect likeness. Of this you will be satisfied, when you have compared it with the original. Look around you, then, upon the world, and see man as he is: view him in childhood, when the first dawnings of reason teach him to discriminate between right and wrong; and, notwithstanding the pratings which you may have heard about the angelic purity of the infant mind, you will find anger, stubbornness, and revenge, prominently developed; and you will confess, that the Bible is faithful in its delineation, when it assures us, that “the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth.”—Gen. viii. 21. Examine the state of society around you, and you will find the germ of evil passions, which makes its appearance at such

an early stage of our existence, thriving as in a genial soil, and bearing in sad abundance its bitter fruits. How much falsehood, and fraud, and villany, will force themselves upon your attention! How little rigid integrity, or sterling principle, or manly, straight-forward decision of character, will you be able to discover! How rarely you will meet with the man so beautifully described in the 15th Psalm, as one who shall abide in the tabernacle of the Lord, and dwell in his holy hill—"He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour. In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the Lord. He that sweareth to his own hurt and changeth not." Just open your eyes in a market or fair, and look at the scenes which, from their commonness, may have hitherto almost escaped your observation. Here the horrid oath will cause you to shudder; there, the tumultuous crowd, and the fierce yellings of men, metamorphosed into demons, will direct you to the spot where two fellow-creatures are venting upon one another their fiendish rage. Soon, however, your attention is called away to another and, if possible, a blacker scene of abomination: a confused din, made up of ravings, and bawlings, and blasphemies, meets your ear,—it proceeds from the ale-house. As you heave the sigh, and exclaim, "Lord, what is man?" you behold, issuing from the door, in drunken silliness, or perhaps in drunken madness—whom? "Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon"—*a professor of religion!*—the very man whom, shortly before, you may have seen at the family altar, or in the house of prayer, or at the *Lord's table!* Reader, have you witnessed such a spectacle? If not, you have yet to see one of the most painful exhibitions you have ever beheld. I have sometimes had the grief of observing such a scene; and as my eyes followed the unhappy individual, I could not help asking—can *that* be a temple for the Holy Ghost? Will the Spirit of holiness and purity dwell in such a cage of uncleanness? Is that the way to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour? Is it thus that we are to "hold forth the word of life?" Oh! it is distressing to think how many professing Christians, reckless of every warning and of every intreaty, are staggering down the broad road which leads to the drunkard's doom! What could more strikingly verify the Scripture account of man, in the most gloomy and appalling of its statements? Turning away, however, from the sickening scenes of the fair or market,

let your observation take in a wider range. Suppose yourselves able to take a bird's-eye view of Britain, on a Sabbath-day; and what a panorama of abominations would be exhibited before you! You would hear, it is true, the bells of a thousand churches ringing, and you would see crowded audiences assembled to hear the word of life; and you would behold the hallowed incense of prayer and praise, rising in clouds of fragrance to Him that dwelleth between the cherubim. But you would probably find the cabinet assembled, and engaged in warm deliberation about the affairs of the empire; and in the metropolis alone, you would behold forty thousand copies of thirteen news-papers issuing openly from three hundred shops, for Sabbath-evening entertainment; and you would find all manner of parties, from the highest to the lowest grades of society, indulging in every species of amusement; and you would witness stage-coaches running, steam-boats sailing, taverns swarming with debauchees and tipplers, public avenues crowded with idle strollers, and, in short, the whole kingdom presenting one variegated scene of liveliness and hilarity. Passing from this humiliating spectacle, need I attempt to describe the wholesale butchery of human beings, which has been perpetrated under the name of heroism; or the horrifying atrocities which have been practised under the guise of religion? Need I advert to New Zealand with its cannibalism, and its ten thousand barbarities; or to the Pacific at large, with its licentious orgies; or to Africa, with its countless tribes of savages; or to India, with its infanticides and suttees, and its three hundred and thirty-three millions of deities? Or shall I dwell on the horrors of a system that tears children from the embraces of their parents, and smothers them under the hatches of a slave-ship; and exposes them for sale to the highest bidder, in the public market-places of a distant land? I hope it is unnecessary. The bare allusion to these painful facts is surely sufficient to convince you that the Bible gives us no distorted picture of the dark places of the earth, when it pronounces them to be "full of the habitations of cruelty."—Psalm lxxiv. 20.

You will remember the vision of Ezekiel from the top of the eastern gate of the temple, when the healing waters of the sanctuary were beginning to issue from its threshold. A desert stretched itself out before him, gloomy and barren, as far as the eye could reach, and bounded by the shore of the putrid and pestilential lake which covers the former site of the cities of the plain. What a striking representation of human nature,

viewed in connexion with the facts to which I have just adverted! A wilderness bleak and barren; having no "hiding place from the wind, nor covert from the tempest;" bringing forth no fruit but the grapes of Sodom and the clusters of Gomorrah, which fill us with expectation, but crumble in the grasp: a dry and thirsty land, where there are no waters but the "waters that fail."—Jer. xv. 18: the mirage of the desert that mocks the weary traveller! The sun, it is true, shines, and the rain descends upon it; but still it remains a dreary, barren waste: its atmosphere loaded with putrid exhalations, and its whole scenery a monument of Jehovah's wrath. And it is not until the streams of the sanctuary flow forth upon it, that the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and that the pestilential waters of the sea are healed. How strikingly correct a portrait of man, even in the deepest and darkest of its colourings!

And now, dear reader, let me assure you, that the truths with which we have been occupied, are not matters of mere barren speculation. On the contrary, they stand prominently forward in that sacred word which convinces, converts, and sanctifies the soul. Impressed, therefore, with their great practical importance to every individual of our race, I would now urge you to apply them to yourselves. Remember that *YOUR state* by nature is that of condemnation, that you are verily guilty in the sight of God; and that the sentence under which you have come, consists in the loss of communion with God, and in his wrath and curse inflicted in the miseries of life, in death, and in the torments of hell. Reflect, also, that *YOUR character* is depraved by nature; and that its depravity consists in the want of original righteousness, the corruption of the heart, and the consequent wickedness of the life. And while you endeavour sincerely and in the spirit of prayer to comply with this exhortation, be not content until, by God's blessing, you experience those effects which such humbling truths are fitted to produce.

By *IGNOTUS.*

UNITARIAN DISCUSSION.

IN the course of the last winter, the Rev. Daniel Bagot of Newry, a minister in the established church, delivered a course of sermons in Belfast on "the Proper Deity of the Word." The known ability and popular talent of the preacher, and the importance of the subject, attracted numerous and respectable

audiences. An abstract of his discourses, which were five in number, was afterwards published; and in advertising this pamphlet, Mr. Bagot called on the Unitarians to reply to his arguments, or abandon their own system as untenable. His call was responded to in the public prints by the Rev. J. S. Porter, assistant minister of the First Presbyterian (Unitarian) Congregation, Belfast; proposing to meet Mr. Bagot in the pages of the *Bible Christian*, or to hold with him a public *viva voce* discussion. The latter mode of conducting this important controversy was finally agreed upon, adopting the subjoined standard of reference; and each undertaking to defend the two propositions with which his name is connected.

STANDARD OF REFERENCE.

The Word of God contained in the books of the Old and New Testament, which are received into the authorised version, admitting them all to be canonical. The correctness or incorrectness of passages marked as spurious in Griesbach's last edition, and the translation, or signification of any particular words or passages, to be open to question and legitimate criticism. The divine authority of Scripture to be admitted on both sides. And all quotations to be given in chapter and verse, according to the divisions of the authorised translation in common use.

Mr. J. S. Porter's Propositions :

1. There is one self-existent God, the Father; who is God alone, to the entire exclusion of the alleged Proper Deity of the Word.

2. The Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is a Created Being (even in his highest capacity, nature, or condition), deriving his existence, wisdom, power, and authority, from the Father; and inferior to him in these and all other attributes.

Mr. Bagot's Propositions :

1. There is one God, Jehovah; who is God only, to the entire exclusion of the alleged godhead of every creature.

2. The Lord Jesus Christ, the Mediator, is the Word made flesh, perfect God and perfect man; possessing, as the Word, the same eternity, knowledge, power, authority, prerogatives, and godhead with the Father, and one with him in all attributes.

The discussion accordingly took place in the First Presbyterian Meeting-house, on Monday, the 14th April, and the

three following days, from 11 o'clock till 3, each day. The attendance from the commencement was rather numerous; but towards the close, on Wednesday and Thursday, the house was completely crowded. So intense was the interest excited, that many ministers, of different denominations, some of them from remote places, attended during all the days of discussion.

The first day of meeting, according to one of the "regulations finally agreed upon" by both parties, was divided into two equal portions, and each was to have given "a statement and proof of the affirmative propositions on his side." From this course Mr. Porter deviated, for what reason we have not ascertained; his opening address containing an attack on the principles of his opponent, and embracing some of the most popular objections to the doctrine of the divinity of Christ. This address was certainly well concocted, interspersed with touching appeals—which, by the way, we rather thought out of place—and delivered with an energetic and appropriate elocution, which seemed, in a great measure, to desert the speaker throughout all the subsequent debate. Mr. Bagot on the contrary, after a few preliminary remarks, confined himself strictly to the statement and defence of his propositions. His address contained a mass of evidence on the subject of the proper Deity of the Word, which his antagonist did not even attempt to meet; and which, we venture to predict, will not be met in a satisfactory manner. But as we do not mean to anticipate the *authenticated report* of the entire discussion, which may be expected in a few weeks, we must rest content to make some general observations, and state distinctly what impressions the controversy has left on our own minds. In these observations, we shall not hesitate to declare our honest convictions, though it may be at the hazard of being charged with harshness or severity.

I. It was our settled opinion from the first, and we see no reason for altering it, that in arranging the preliminaries, Mr. Bagot should have insisted on a statement more definite, respecting the person of Christ, than that which Mr. Porter furnished in his second proposition. Mr. Bagot's views were positive and affirmative. He declared the Word to be perfect God and perfect man. Here he was committed to the defence of a precise definite statement; and his proposition furnished an unequivocal answer to the question, What think ye of Christ? In Mr. Porter's second proposition, he asserted that Christ is a created being, without determining whether he is man, or angel, or superangelic. Is Christ a man? Is he

an angel? Is he above angels, and *constituting*, as it were, an order of creation by himself? Such questions receive no answer from Mr. Porter's propositions. He gives us no affirmative view of the person of the Redeemer—he furnishes no means of ascertaining whether his own sentiments are Arian or Socinian. Now, we think that it is but fairness and common justice, that disputants should stand on the same level,—that when one states, positively and precisely, the doctrine he is prepared to defend, the other should do the same. Mr. Bagot affirmed the equality of the Word with the Father; Mr. Porter put forward a declaration which is characteristic of no distinct creed, and which left him suspended between Arianism and Socinianism. This enabled him to avail himself of two classes of weapons, though it must have been evident to every one who had the slightest acquaintance with polemic theology, that the *points* were often turned against himself. It is true, indeed, he declared for the pre-existence of the Saviour; but this declaration, on his own showing, is subject to a large discount. He felt inclined to receive the doctrine, but he saw it to be encumbered with great difficulties. He adduced many texts, which affirmed or implied the pre-existence of our Lord; he also adduced a great number in which Jesus is called man. Now, we cannot get rid of the conviction, that in all this Mr. Porter was cutting the throat of his own system. If he is an Arian, the texts which he himself adduced, asserting the doctrine of the manhood of Christ, level his principles to the earth. If, again, he is a Socinian, we are unable to conjecture what reply, short of extermination, he will give to the texts advanced in his own speeches respecting Christ's pre-existence. Mr. Bagot's statements on this point will be found worthy of careful perusal by every lover of the Bible; and though he committed an oversight in allowing his antagonist to take up a *double* position, his attack was conducted with such ability as rendered the defence of that position hopeless. Mr. Bagot evinced great talent and readiness in debate. Many a weapon wrested from his opponent, he wielded to good purpose. He made the enemy's artillery to thin the enemy's ranks. The victory he achieved was more decisive than his best friends could have anticipated.

II. We admired the courtesy and Christian dispositions which Mr. Bagot maintained through the whole discussion. These are the theme of *general*, we wish, for the credit of humanity, we could say of *universal* admiration. We hate invidious comparisons. We desire not to hurt the feelings of

any individual, but we must speak the truth; and we do so by expressing our wonder that even the spirit of partizanship itself could blind any human being to the Christian dispositions of Mr. Bagot. His dispositions are good and courteous *absolutely; comparatively*, they appeared angelic. Yet there was a fraction of the audience, and particularly of "the fairer, frailer sex," romantic, imaginative creatures, who fancied they had discovered all sorts of evil under the meek and becoming exterior of the Trinitarian Champion. Harshness, ferocity, sardonic grins, and several other things were spoken of by these gentle daughters of Eve, as ready to burst from beneath the garb of his assumed humility. Such misty, fitful fancies—such creations of *poetic charity*—at length took a distinct form. Mr. Bagot, it was averred, had made an unwarrantable attack on Dr. Bruce. Mr. Porter *himself* had designated this attack "an unkind, uncourteous, contemptible, clap-trap allusion" to the Doctor. What need of further witness? Surely this was too bad; and strange, indeed, if such conduct would not seal Mr. Bagot's condemnation. But let it be remembered, 1st, That Mr. Porter was the *first* to introduce the name of Dr. Bruce, and therefore on himself devolved the *honour* of a clap-trap allusion: and 2d, That Mr. Bagot attacked Dr. Bruce's published principles, whilst he spoke of the Doctor with the highest respect, styling him "a venerable and venerated character." This is *our* defence of Mr. Bagot; and we assert it to be triumphant, the enemies themselves being judges.

We cannot, however, deny ourselves the pleasure of inserting Dr. Bruce's defence of Mr. Bagot. What! is it possible? Dr. Bruce defend Mr. Bagot! Strange as it may appear, it is true. We hope the ladies to whom we have alluded will forgive the Doctor for thus removing the last *peg* on which to fasten the charge of harshness, ferocity, and sardonic grins. At a meeting held since the discussion, Dr. Bruce wisely stepped forward to prevent his Unitarian brethren from stultifying themselves by passing a resolution condemnatory of Mr. Bagot's allusion to him. Dr. Bruce's remarks, as reported in the public prints, are the following: "I beg to object to that resolution. I was rather surprised to find that any person was hurt by the remarks of Mr. Bagot. I was not hurt by them myself; for they were accompanied with expressions of great compliment, which showed that the speaker entertained towards me no feelings of dislike or disrespect. I should, therefore, be sorry that any notice was taken of that

part of the discussion; for, as I have said, the words objected to were accompanied by many compliments to myself: and with regard to Mr. Bagot differing from me on theological points, I think that *he was perfectly at liberty to express that difference.*" We congratulate Mr. Bagot on the clear and manly defence which Dr. Bruce has set up for him; and we express a confident hope that all his *fair* accusers will ere long acknowledge the mild and Christian dispositions, which he maintained under circumstances of considerable provocation. A few individuals charge Mr. Bagot with want of candour. To defend him is perhaps superfluous. Why? Because, in all probability, some Unitarian will start up, like Dr. Bruce, and take the defence out of our hands. Such a course would not at all surprise us. We have seen stranger things of late. In the mean time, we ask what is the ground of such charge? Simply this,—that Mr. Bagot steadily refused to enter on the discussion of the doctrine of the Trinity. For what reason did he so refuse? For the best reason in the world, *viz.* that Mr. Porter and he met to discuss the doctrine of the proper Deity of the Word, and not the doctrine of the Trinity. The charge of want of candour, therefore, is about as well supported as the charge of an unwarrantable attack on Dr. Bruce. Such charges so poorly supported are miserable shifts, quite beneath any man of reason and common sense; and we leave every reader to judge whether they do not appear very like the suggestions of conscious defeat.

III. The triumph of evangelical truth in this discussion, should awaken in her friends sentiments of lively gratitude to God. We have already expressed our conviction that Mr. Bagot gained a decisive victory. We felt it; and we still feel it. The community at large feel it. The correctness of our conviction has been attested by people of all creeds and of all parties.—Episcopalians, Roman Catholics, Presbyterians of the Synod of Ulster, Presbyterians of the Secession Church, Covenanters, Methodists, and several Unitarians themselves, with whose sentiments we happen to be acquainted, are all convinced that there has been a triumph to the cause of orthodoxy. How do Unitarians feel as a body? We know something of that, too; and we would not insult their understandings by insinuating that they do not perceive their defeat. At one of their meetings, a reverend gentleman applauds Mr. Porter for the *erudition* he displayed on the *fourth* day of the discussion. What a "left-handed" compliment, when we call to mind that *the erudition* was displayed in Mr. Porter's

last speech, when he knew that his opponent had no opportunity of replying. Mr. Porter was certainly prudent in selecting the last hour for the display of his learning; but the eye of friendship should not have rested on such conduct. It should have been left to the opponents of Mr. Porter to record, and celebrate such a display of erudition at such a time. For our own part, we were inclined to class it with Mr. Porter's declining to accept Mr. Bagot's challenge to continue the discussion during the following week.

Let us look to the terms in which Dr. Bruce expresses himself respecting the result of the discussion: "And, whatever any person may think of the *Debate*, I trust," says he, "that when the *Report* appears, Mr. Porter's triumph will be more complete; and that his conduct in the discussion will be more universally approved of, than it is at present." How desponding! Only one ray of hope: and the publication of the *Report*, we opine, will destroy *that*. Does the Doctor's language come warm from a heart rejoicing in victory? Peruse it again, reader, and believe that it does if you are able. This we consider to be a fair specimen of indirect Unitarian testimony to the triumph of evangelical religion in the hands of Mr. Bagot.

At such a crisis, what is the duty of all who believe in the One God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost? Let them thank God, and take courage. Let not Mr. Bagot, and those who entertain the same sentiments, be exalted above measure, in consequence of the triumph which the Lord has given to the word of his grace. With humble and steadfast hope, let them rely on him who is mighty to save, ascribing all the glory to his great name, and labouring and praying, that the Bible may have free course and be glorified. Let them remember that one of Mr. Bagot's chief advantages over his opponent, is to be traced to his intimate acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures, which he appears to have studied from his childhood, and let this consideration act as one of the thousand inducements which press them to persevere in searching the Scriptures. Let their earnest desire and prayer to God for the unconverted, be, that they may be saved—saved by him in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to riches of his grace.

MELANCTHON.

LONDON MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

EAST INDIES.

Extract from Rev. William Buyer's Journal, in a Letter, Dated Benares, 26th March, 1833.

October 27th.—Went early in the morning to the school at Chait-gunge, where, after examining the children, I preached to an attentive congregation assembled in the street in front of the school. Afterwards went into the city. Had a long discussion with four respectable Mussulmans. They obstinately maintained that there are clear and distinct prophecies respecting Mohammed both in the Old and New Testaments; and I of course maintained that there are none, but such as allude to him as a false prophet. About the evidences of the divine origin of the Koran, almost all Mohammedans argue very confusedly. Indeed, external evidence does not seem to reach their minds with the force it exerts on ours. One to-day argued that we are bound to believe in the Koran, because it was communicated by a prophet of God; but when asked what reason we have to regard Mohammed as a prophet of God, he answered, that we are assured of this by the Koran. Absurd as this argument would appear to every European, it was no easy task to convince him that he was reasoning in a circle. Sometimes an argument that to us would appear almost demonstrative, will to these Mussulman literati seem of no force whatever; while one that we should regard as puerile, or as a *petitio principii*, will seem to them irresistible; and yet they possess an acuteness which often requires all our art and ingenuity to meet with success. Between them and Europeans there seems to me to be far more difference in the *mode* of thinking and reasoning, than in real mental acumen. In real knowledge and depth of thought the polemic of this part of Hindostan is undoubtedly far inferior to an educated European; but I have never met with men who could use so little information with so much dexterity in argument.

October 30th.—Went in the morning, in company with Mr. Robertson, to visit a very aged Mussulman, one of the most respectable men of Benares. We found him seated to receive us in his hall, according to the custom of the country, with his dependents around him. He is an exceedingly venerable man, I believe upwards of eighty; and his long white beard and intelligent countenance gave him a very patriarchal appearance. On our being seated, he called for a fine Arabic Bible and two editions of the Persian New Testament, which he seems greatly to value. I have been informed that, after he received these some time ago, he sent all his Mohammedan books to Calcutta to be sold; so that now he only uses the Christian Scriptures.

I remained in the city most of the day. Had a long discussion with two Mussulmans *on the divinity of Christ*, as taught in the Gospel, and the nature of his sufferings and death as an atonement for sin. They seemed to be convinced of the futility of their common objection, that Christians, by holding the *doctrine of the Trinity*, corrupt the Gospel, and believe in three Gods. The words used in Hindoo to express the distinctions in the Godhead, are perhaps less objectionable than those employed in English; at least, I meet with many; both

Hindoos and Mussulmans, who seem to have no difficulty in understanding that the Deity is absolutely one, while in another sense existing in a Trinity. Some of the more metaphysical of the Hindoos maintain the unity of the Godhead, and regard the doctrine of a *plurality of Gods as a mere vulgar corruption of the true doctrine of one supreme Being, with certain personal distinctions, like those ascribed to him in the Christian Scriptures.* That the true ancient doctrine of Hindooism taught the *unity of God* is certain, and that thousands of the present Hindoos cannot justly be charged either with *polytheism or idolatry*, in the proper sense of the terms, is also certain; but it is highly probable, that the ideas which some of their sages seem to have about personal distinctions in the Godhead, are borrowed indirectly from Christianity.

November 2d.—In the morning went to Alipore, where I had a good congregation in the front of the school, and in the forenoon went into the city. The only thing worthy of notice was a long discussion with a Hindoo Moonshee. His arguments were all in favour of Atheism, and were very subtle. It is curious that the sceptical systems of Pyrrho, Hume, &c. are extensively prevalent among the philosophical sects of the Hindoos; and there are many reasons for believing that the scepticism by which, in the last century, it was hoped by some, and feared by others, that Christianity itself was to be driven from Europe, was transplanted originally from the banks of the Ganges. One thing at least is clear, that it was delivered as the dictates of celestial wisdom, by the sages of Hindostan, ages before it turned the brains of the Sophoi either of Greece or of Britain.

November 6th.—In the evening, had a good and uncommonly attentive congregation in the Chapel. What was rather unusual, the Hindoos took one side, and the Mussulmans another. May that Gospel to which both listened, be the means of soon uniting them in the service of the one living and true God!

November 7th.—The congregation this evening not so good as usual, in consequence of some rites performed at the same time at the temple, close by the chapel, which is very much frequented, and was this evening splendidly illuminated. The Hindoo system has a greater hold on the minds of the people as the *source of amusement* than as a system of devotion.

Though slowly, the Gospel is evidently gaining ground in Benares. *The current of public opinion is beginning to change its direction, and a sort of favourable impression, with respect to Christianity, has already spread to a considerable extent.* That the *Hindoos will soon throw off their present religion* is, I think, no longer a subject of doubt. Such an event is inevitable; since the system *has lost all hold on the conscience of such an immense body of the people*, that, were they aware properly of each other's sentiments, and possessed a little union among themselves, they would instantly rebel against the Brahmins and the oppression of caste. Hindooism seems at present, in this city, to owe its existence not half so much to the attachment of the people, as to their want of mutual understanding. Were some daring spirits to arise among them as leaders, many of them would readily become dissenters from the popular religion. One man has already formed a sect in Benares, whose doctrines are compounded of Christianity and Hindooism, but who reject idolatry. The rise among such religionists, we have every reason to expect, from Scriptural truth blending unconsciously with their previous sentiments.

ORDINATION.—On Tuesday, the 1st of April, the Presbytery of Market-hill ordained the Rev. Joseph Weir Hunter to the pastoral charge of the Congregation of Ahorey, in connexion with the Presbyterian Secession Church. The services of the day were commenced by the Rev. John Weir of Newry, who delivered a highly appropriate and impressive discourse, from Isaiah lxii. 1. The Rev. John West of Newtonhamilton, explained and defended Presbyterian Ordination: after which, Mr. Hunter was solemnly set apart to the sacred office, by prayer and “the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery.” The Rev. Robert Morrison of Market-hill succeeded, and addressed a most eloquent and impressive charge to minister and people. The Rev. Samuel Dunlop of Garmoney’s Grove, concluded the services of the day, with a sermon from Isaiah xxii. 24.

Original Poetry.

SCRIPTURE SONGS—NO. VI.

ISAIAH, ix. 2--7

The light hath gone forth, and the people long dwelling
In the land of the shadow of death and the tomb,
Have seen the glad beams, ancient darkness dispelling,
With the brightness of noon day their region illumine.

Where sorrow once reigned, strains of joy now are waking,
Loud as those of the reaper when harvest is done—
As the songs of the warrior in triumph forth breaking,
When he gathers the spoil which his valour hath won.

For thou, Lord, the yoke of their bondage hast broken,
And the rod of the tyrant—the staff of his sway—
As erst when the trumpet of Gideon had spoken,
And the host of the Midianite fled in dismay.

More glorious, by far, than when warriors contending
’Mid the horrors of war, are victorious in fight,—
Thy triumph, O God! when the Spirit descending,
Shall consume all thy foes in the blaze of his might.

For, lo! unto us hath a Saviour been given,
Lo! a child hath been born, whose reign never shall cease,—
The Wonderful—Counsellor—God of high heaven,—
The Father eternal—the Prince of all Peace.

All nations, all kindreds, just homage confessing,
Shall rejoice in His sway, and His praises record;
And the kingdom of David, exult in the blessing.—
Oh! how glorious the might and the zeal of the Lord!

G.